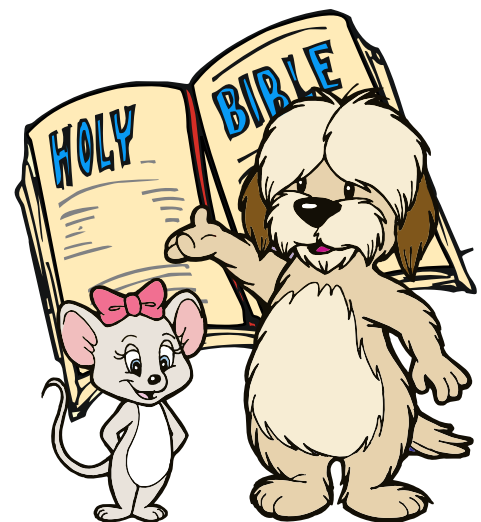


Tour of the Holy Lands - Netanya



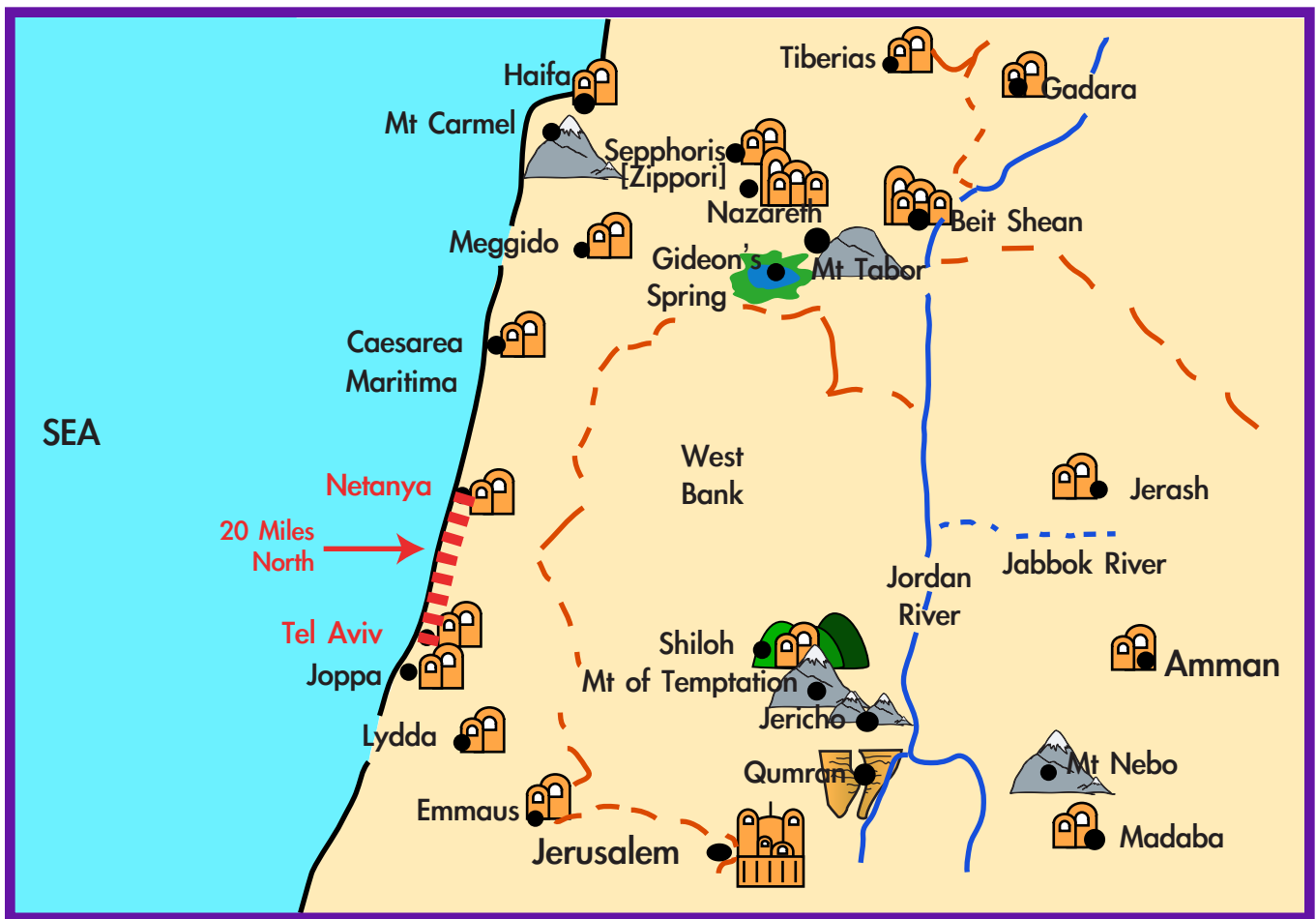
Today we invite you to join us as we begin a journey to a land where many of the people of the Bible lived, people like Moses and Jesus. It's very exciting! We've been looking forward to this for a long time and we've been reading our Bibles to prepare for this trip.





Our airplane lands in Israel near Tel Aviv, a modern city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. We climb into our large tour bus and begin our journey.



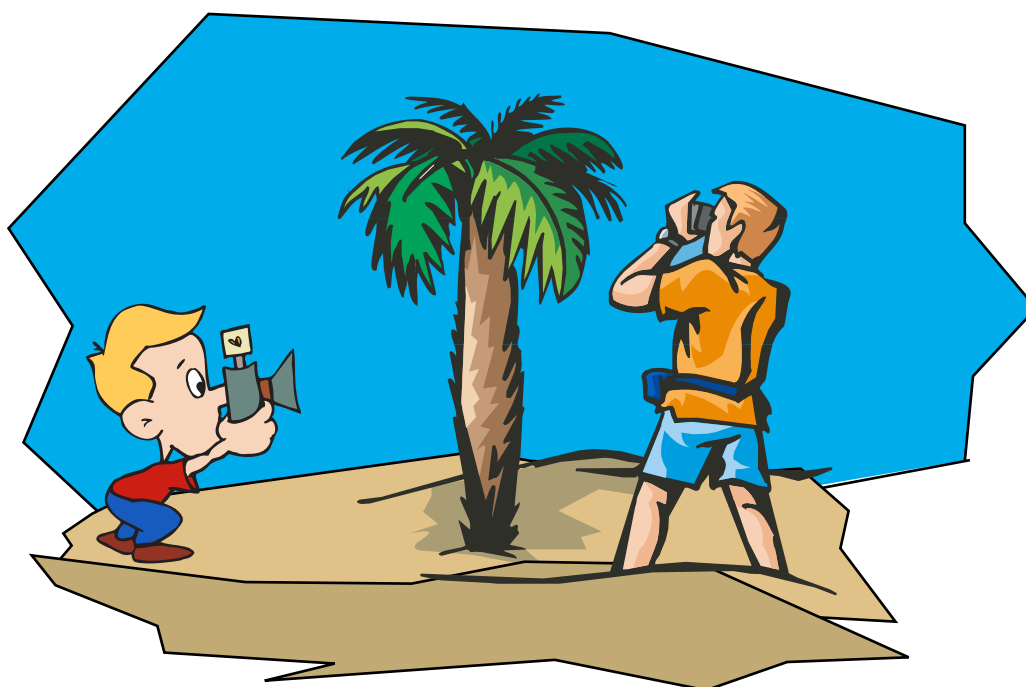


We drive for 20 miles north along the sea.





Our eyes take in all the sights along the way, like these palm trees grown for their dates. We're taking lots of pictures. We want to share this experience with our friends back home, who wished they could have come.



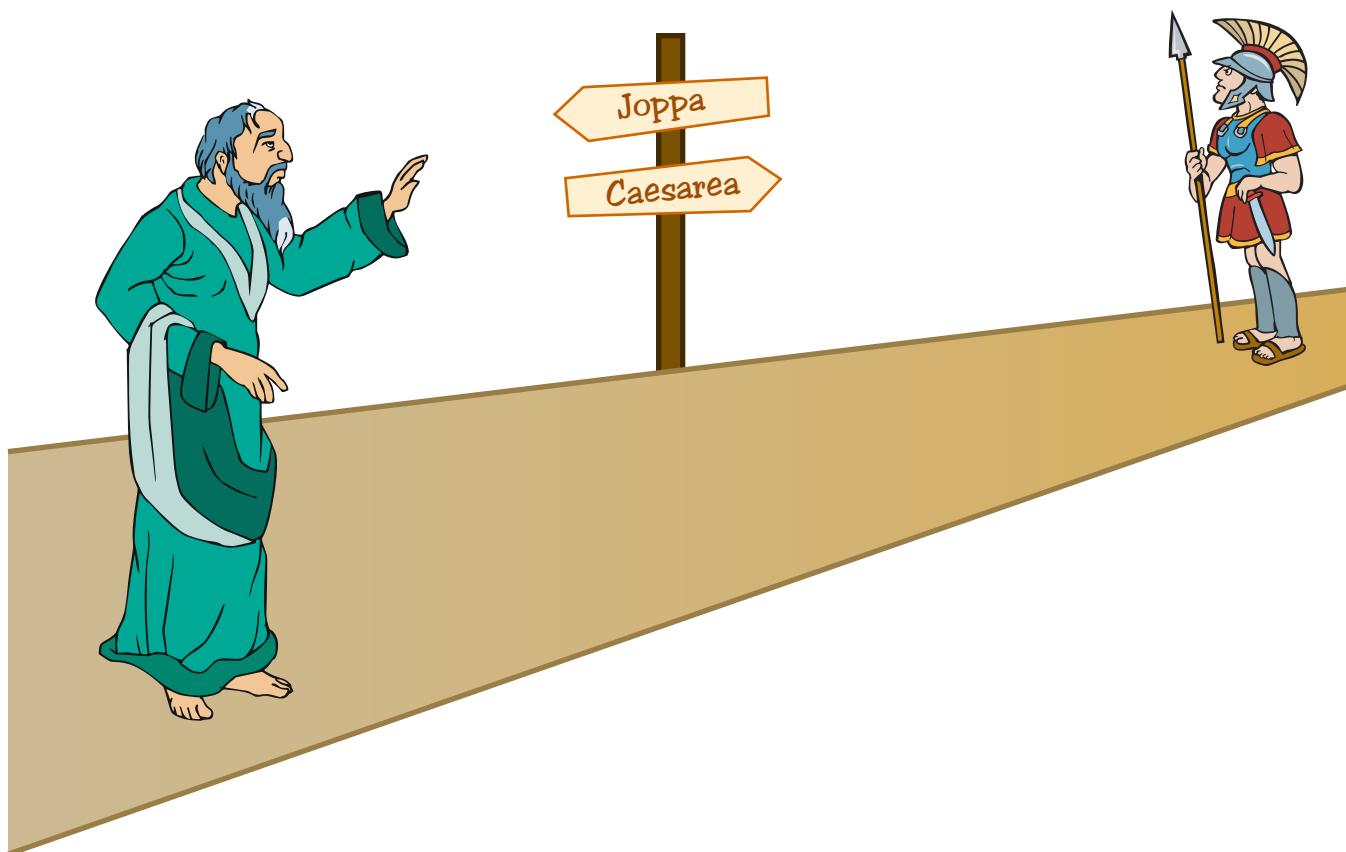


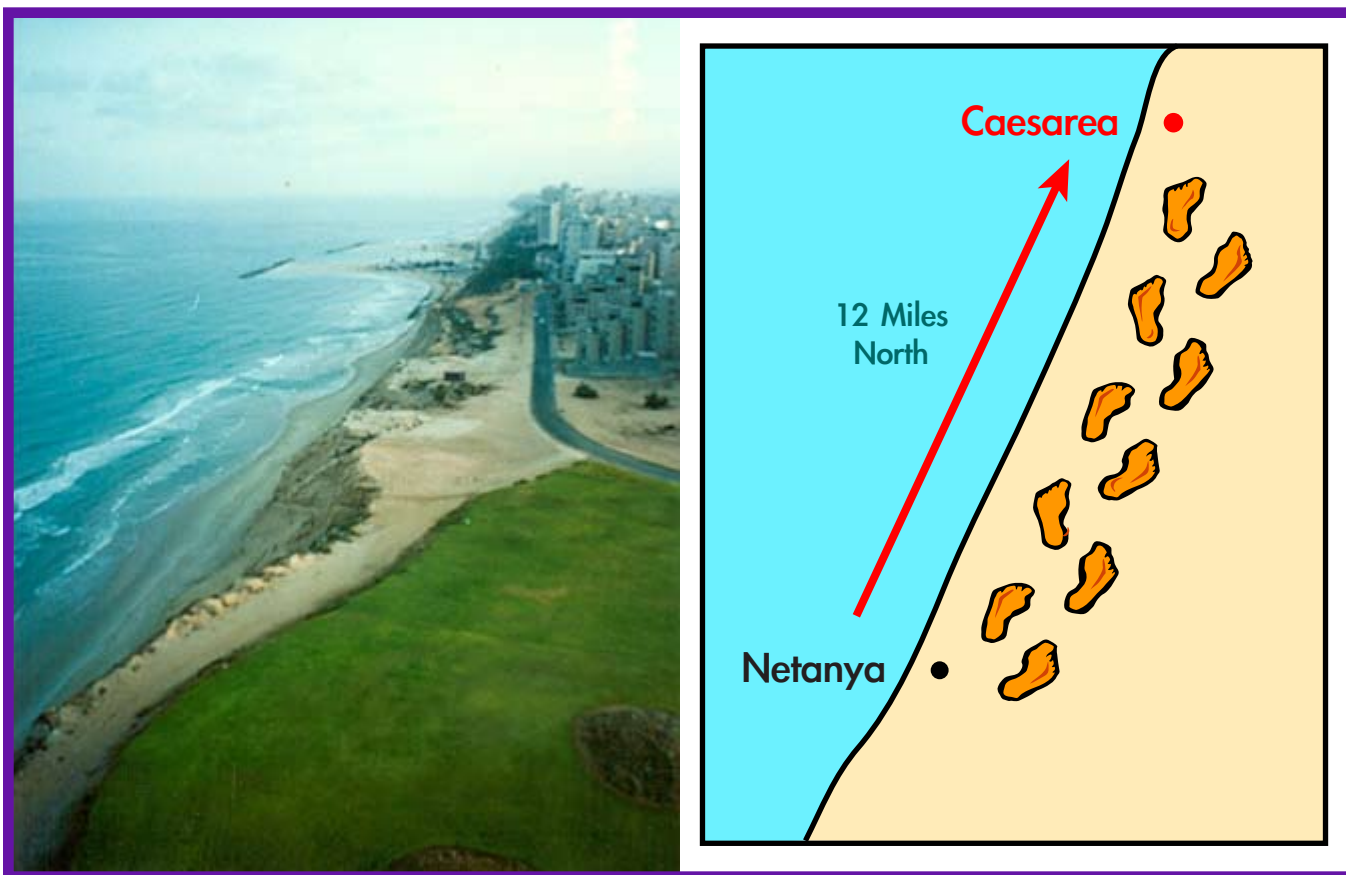
We arrive at our hotel. It's so modern! And we can hear the sea! We want to walk in the sand, but we have to take our suitcases up to our rooms first. We look out the window. We're so high that parasailors could wave at us!





Looking left, we see the beach where Peter came from Joppa, just 30 miles south of us, on his way to meet Cornelius, the Roman Centurion.





Looking right, we can see where Peter continued on north. The story can be found in the Bible in Acts 10:1 - Acts 11:18. After Jesus was gone, Peter was in charge of his followers. He still had a lot to learn, but God was guiding him. He would learn an important lesson right here by the sea.

The story begins 12 miles north of us in a Roman city called Caesarea (sezare'a) by the Sea. The words "by the Sea" are added because there is another Caesarea that we will also be visiting.

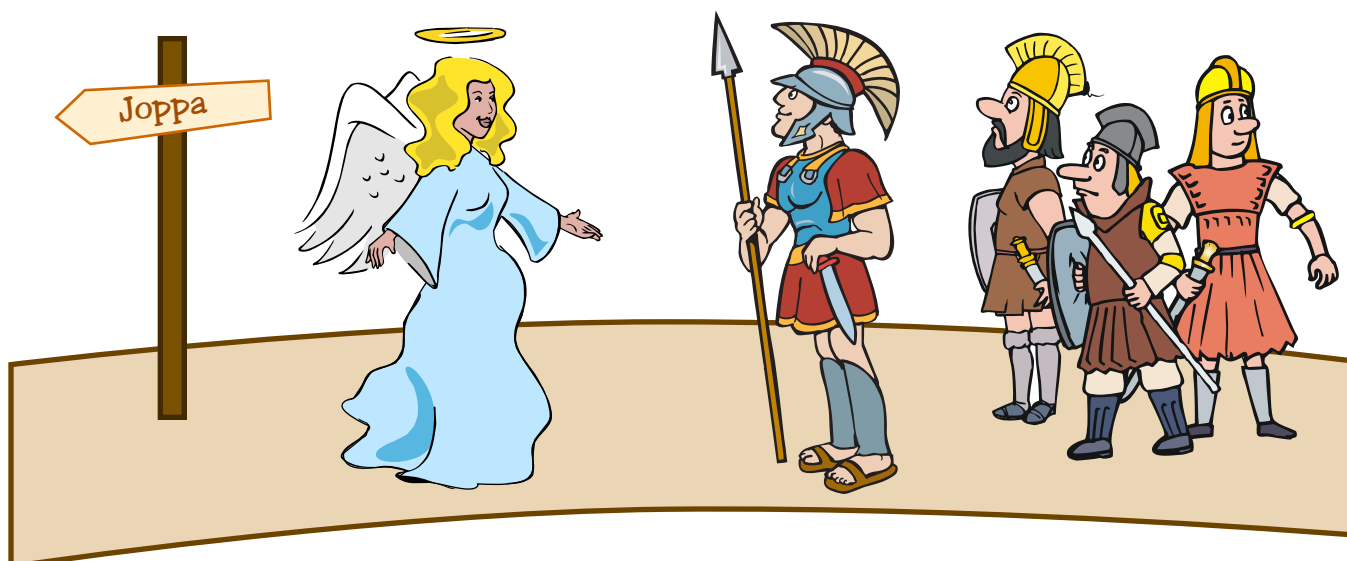




Cornelius was a Centurion in the Roman army. A Centurion was in charge of about 100 soldiers. The Romans ruled the country at that time. The Jews called anyone who was not a Jew, a "Gentile." Cornelius was not like other Gentiles who worshiped many gods. When he found out that the Jews worshiped only one God, who was invisible, yet powerful, he and his family left their old gods and began praying to the Jewish God every day and giving money to help the Jews.

Then something unusual happened. One afternoon as he was praying, an angel came, calling his name. "Cornelius!" He was very afraid. He said, "What do you want, sir?"

The angel said, "God has noticed your prayers and has seen the way you give to the poor. Go to Joppa, (which was about 30 miles south of Caesarea,) and find a man called Simon Peter. He'll tell you what to do." Right away Cornelius did what he was told and sent three men down to Joppa.





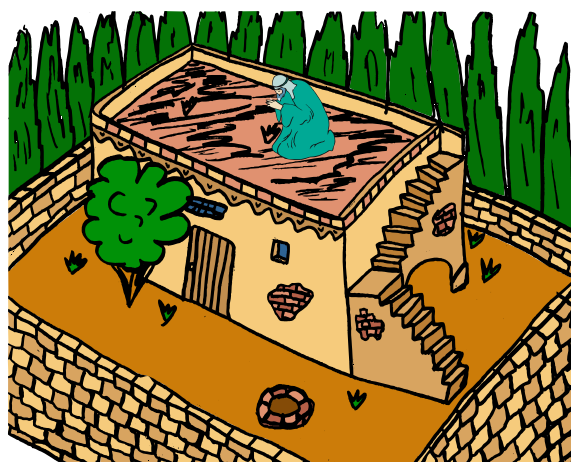
We'll finish this story down on the beach so we can dip our feet in the Mediterranean Sea. We want to stand where the three servants walked about 2000 years ago.

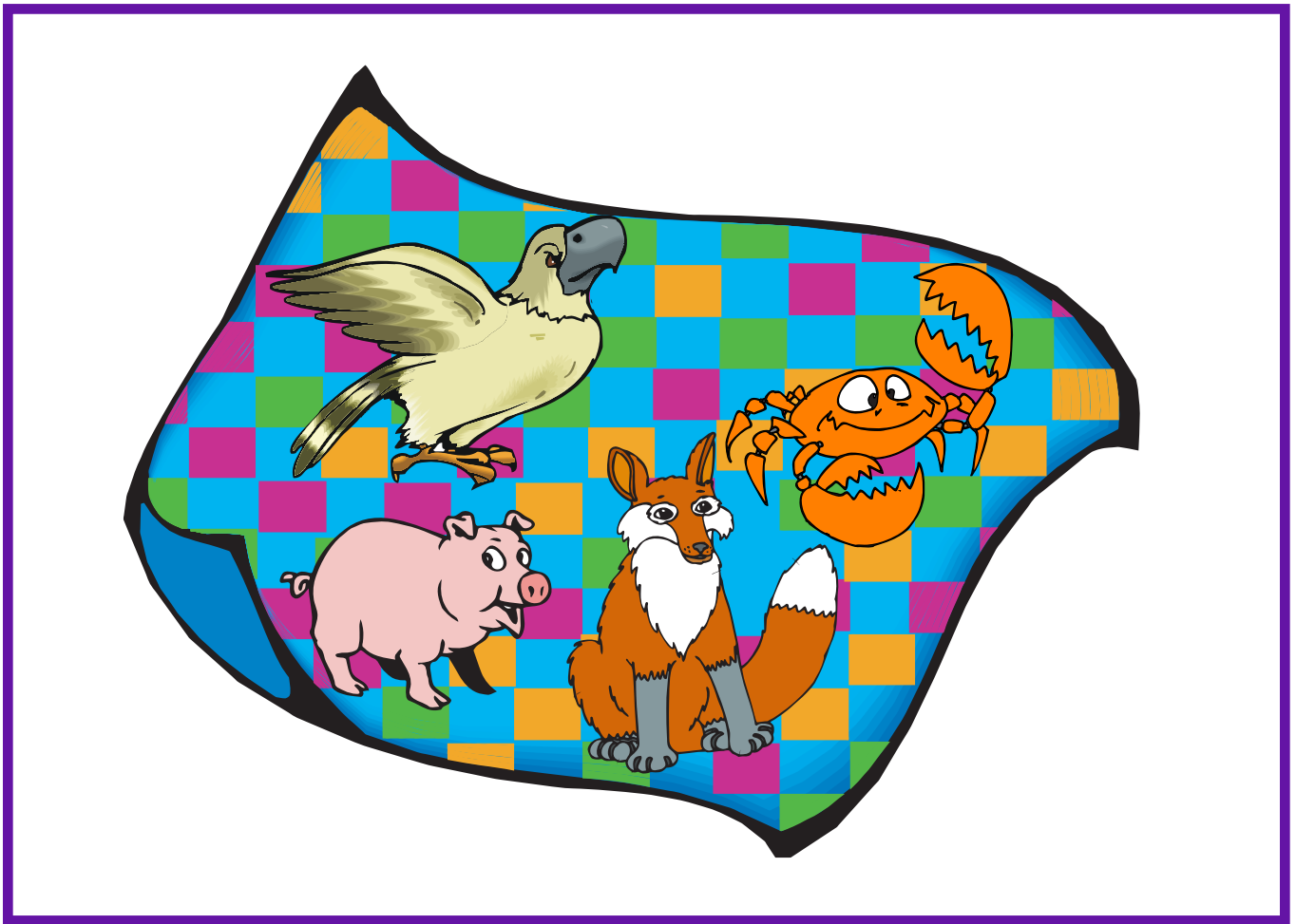




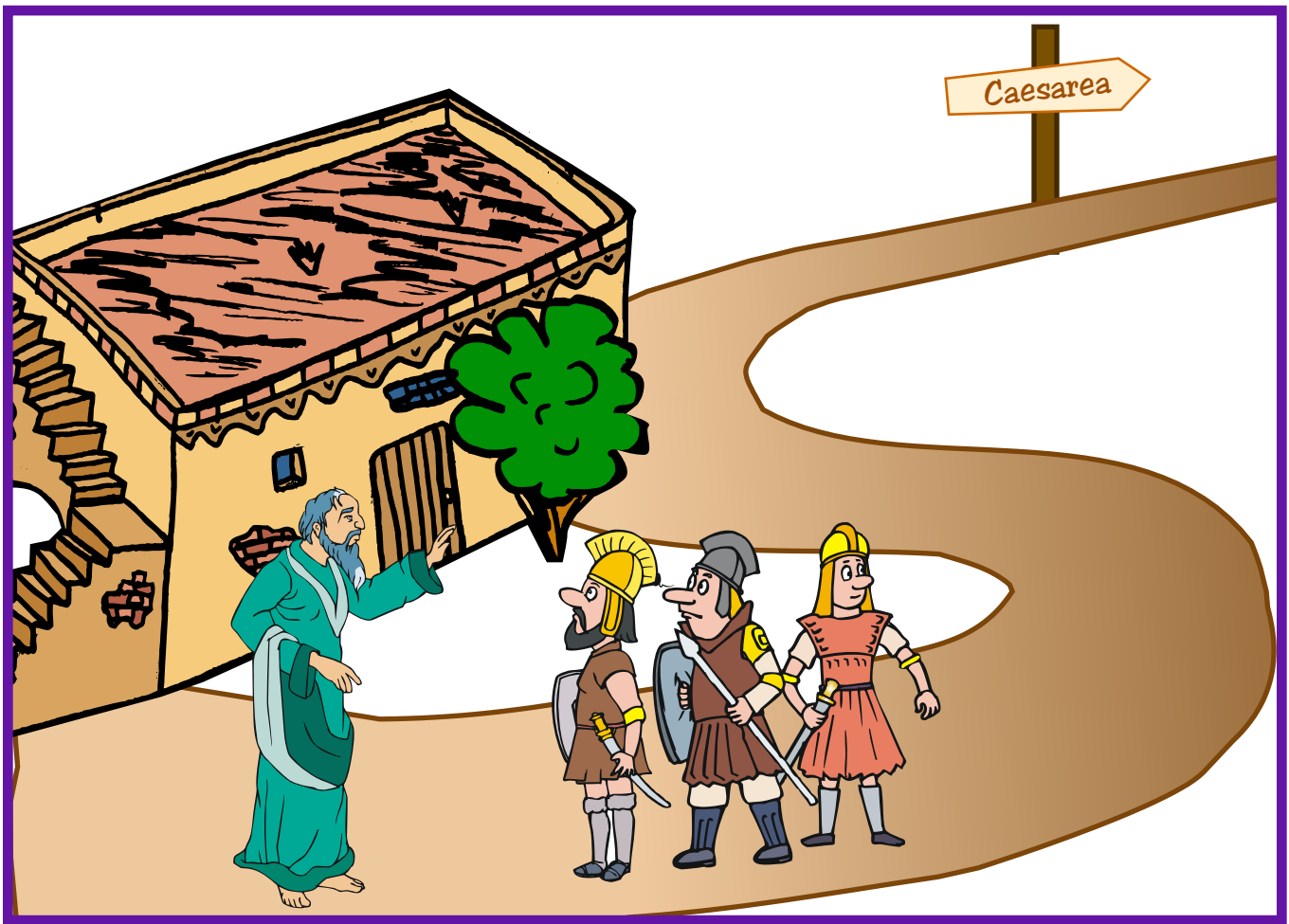
We could almost reach up and touch the colorful parasailors. They're landing on the same beach where the three men were walking. Cornelius couldn't call Peter on the phone to tell him they were coming. So Peter was not expecting visitors. He was thinking about something else altogether. Jesus had given his followers instructions as to what to do after he was gone. They were to be "witnesses," which meant they were to share all they heard and saw about Jesus with everyone around the world. Peter would probably have preferred to stay home and share it with his friends and neighbors who were Jewish.

That day at noon Peter climbed up onto the roof of the house in Joppa to pray and hear what God might tell him. That's what Jesus would do.





All of a sudden, he saw a vision. A giant picnic blanket came down from the sky like a parasail. In it were all kinds of animals and birds. A voice told him to kill and eat them. Peter was shocked. His religion taught him never to eat some of the animals that were in that blanket. They were considered "unclean." To a Jew, only animals that were on the list of clean animals in the Bible (Leviticus 11) could be eaten. Eating an unclean animal or bird or fish kept a man from worshiping God for a while.



Peter wondered what the vision meant. It came to him three times, which meant he had better pay attention. Peter was so puzzled over this that he didn't hear a knock at the gate below. We know who was there – three strangers - Romans, Gentiles, who invited him to come with them to Caesarea. After his vision, Peter began to do things he would never have done before. First he invited these Gentiles into the house for the night. Then he walked with them all the way back to Caesarea. Then he entered into the house of Cornelius and ate his food. His Jewish religion had taught him that he was now unclean after dealing with unclean Gentiles. Had he been wrong to call them unclean all these years?



When Cornelius knelt before Peter, Peter grabbed him and stood him back on his feet. "Don't do that," he said. "You and I are equal. God has shown me that nobody is better than anybody else." Peter told everyone in the house all about Jesus that day. Jesus would have been proud of him. He had learned a great lesson. Now he knew that the message Jesus had been teaching and practicing was not for Jews only. It was for the whole world.





As the sun sets across the Sea, we hear boys laughing nearby.





They ask us our names and tell us theirs. These Jewish boys speak Hebrew just like most of the people in the Bible. Tonight they want to try out their English. We laugh together.

English = laugh Hebrew = לשחוק





It's a holiday, and their parents let them stay out all night on the beach. They have built huge bonfires and let us take their pictures. There are thousands of bonfires all over the country tonight.





These boys are just like us and we are just like them. We're not Jews and Gentiles. We're all children of God.

